

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A processing unit connectable to a data communications network, the processing unit comprising a device reader operable to read a supplied network identity from a portable storage device, the processing unit being operable to
5 use the supplied network identity from the portable storage device for communicating via the data communications network, the processing unit being operable to monitor a continued presence of the portable storage device, and, in the event of the removal of the portable storage device from the device reader, to signal a fault state.
- 10 2. The processing unit of claim 1, wherein the processing unit is further operable to power itself down where a portable storage device having the supplied network identity is not returned to the device reader within a predetermined time following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader.
- 15 3. The processing unit of claim 1, comprising first memory operable to store a default network identity for communication via the data communications network and second memory operable to receive the supplied network identity from the portable storage device.
- 20 4. The processing unit of claim 3, wherein the processing unit is operable on being powered up to determine whether a said portable storage device is present and, where a said portable storage device is present, to copy the supplied network identity from the portable storage device to the second
25 memory and to use the supplied network identity.
5. The processing unit of claim 3, wherein the processing unit is operable to detect removal of the portable storage device from the device reader and to start a timer running to define a predetermined time.

6. The processing unit of claim 5, wherein the processing unit is operable to power itself down where a portable storage device having the supplied network identity is not returned to the device reader within the predetermined time following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader.
7. The processing unit of claim 5, wherein, following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader, the processing unit is operable to detect a new presence of a portable storage device, to read a network identity from the newly present portable storage device, and to compare the read network identity to the supplied network identity in the second memory.
8. The processing unit of claim 7, wherein the processing unit is operable to cancel the timer and accept the newly present portable storage device if the network identities match.
9. The processing unit of claim 7, wherein the processing unit is operable to let the timer run and to signal a fault where the network identities do not match.
10. The processing unit of claim 5, wherein the processing unit is operable to cause a fault light to operate during running of the timer to signal a fault condition.
11. The processing unit of claim 1, wherein said portable storage device is a data card and the device reader is a data card reader.
12. The processing unit of claim 1, wherein said portable storage device is a smart card and said device reader is a smart card reader.

13. The processing unit of claim 1, wherein the network identity comprises a MAC address.
14. The processing unit of claim 1, comprising a service processor, the service processor being programmed to control reading of the device reader.
15. The processing unit of claim 1, wherein the processing unit is a rack mountable computer server.
16. A control program for controlling the selection of a network identity for a processing unit connectable to a data communications network, the processing unit having a device reader operable to read a supplied network identity from a portable storage device, the control program being operable to select the supplied network identity from the portable storage device for communication via the data communications network, the control program being operable to monitor a continued presence of the portable storage device and, in the event of the removal of the portable storage device from the device reader, to signal a fault state.
17. The control program of claim 16, wherein the control program is further operable to cause the processing unit to power down where a portable storage device having the supplied network identity is not returned to the device reader within a predetermined time following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader.
18. The control program of claim 17, wherein the processing unit includes first memory operable to store a default network identity for communication via the data communications network and second memory operable to receive the supplied network identity from the portable storage device.

19. The control program of claim 18, wherein the control program is operable in response to the processing unit being powered up to determine whether a said portable storage device is present and, where a said portable storage device is present, to copy the supplied network identity from the portable storage device to the second memory and to select the supplied network identity if the portable storage device is present.
20. The control program of claim 18, wherein the control program is operable to detect removal of the portable storage device from the device reader and to start a timer running to define a predetermined time.
21. The control program of claim 20, wherein the control program is operable to cause the processing unit to power down where a portable storage device having the supplied network identity is not returned to the device reader within the predetermined time following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader.
22. The control program of claim 20, wherein, following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader, the control program is responsive to a new presence of a portable storage device to read a network identity from the newly present portable storage device and to compare the read network identity to the supplied network identity in the second memory
23. The control program of claim 22, wherein the control program is operable to cancel the timer and accept the newly present portable storage device if the network identities match.
24. The control program of claim 23, wherein the control program is operable to let the timer run and to signal a fault where the network identities do not match.

25. The control program of claim 20, wherein the control is operable to cause a fault light to operate during running of the timer to signal a fault condition.
- 5 26. The control program of claim 16, wherein the network identity comprises a MAC address.
27. A microcontroller programmed comprising a control program as recited in claim 16.
- 10 28. A server computer comprising a device reader, a processor, memory and a microcontroller as recited in claim 27, the microcontroller being operable as a service processor and connected to monitor the device reader to detect the presence of a portable storage device and to read content from the portable storage device.
- 15 29. A method of controlling the selection of a network identity for a processing unit connectable to a data communications network, the method comprising:
- 20 - a device reader reading a supplied network identity from a portable storage device;
- using the supplied network identity from the portable storage device for communication via the data communications network;
- monitoring the presence of the portable storage device; and
- 25 - in the event of the removal of the portable storage device from the device reader, signalling a fault state.
30. The method of claim 29, further comprising powering down the processing unit where a portable storage device having network identity is not returned in the device reader within a predetermined time following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader.
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31. The method of claim 30, wherein a first memory in the processing unit stores a default network identity for communication via the data communications network and a second memory in the data processing unit receives the supplied network identity from the portable storage device.
32. The method of claim 31, further comprising, in response to the processing unit being powered up, determining whether a said portable storage device is present, and:
- where a said portable storage device is present,
 - copying the supplied network identity from the portable storage device to the second memory; and
 - selecting the supplied network identity.
33. The method of claim 32, comprising, in response to detecting removal of the portable storage device from the device reader, starting a timer running to define a predetermined time.
34. The method of claim 33, comprising powering down the processing unit where a portable storage device having the supplied network identity is not returned in the device reader within the predetermined time following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader.
35. The method of claim 33, wherein, following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader, the control program is responsive to a new presence of a portable storage device to read a network identity from the newly present portable storage device and to compare the read network identity to the supplied network identity in the second memory

36. The method of claim 35, comprising cancelling the timer and accepting the newly present portable storage device if the network identities match.
37. The method of claim 35, comprising permitting the timer to run and to signal a fault where the network identities do not match.
38. The method of any of claim 29, comprising causing a fault light to operate during running of the timer to signal a fault condition.
- 10 39. The method of any of claim 30, wherein the network identity comprises a MAC address.